

WORLD FOOD DAY

New Vision
ADVERTISER SUPPLEMENT

Fruits at Nakasero Market in Kampala. To ensure food for all by 2030, all stakeholders should put hands together as weather patterns and wars are affecting agriculture

Is hunger-free Uganda possible?

By Joshua Kato

Food is the soul of any living creature. As the world population increases, so is the need for more food. And yet, challenges to food production are also increasing every day. So, as the world marks the World Food Day, there is need to mitigate the two factors – the increasing demand for food and the challenges to food production.

Karamoja

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), together with the Government and partners, will hold celebrations to mark World Food Day, today at Nabuin Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Nabuin ZARDI), located on Lorengdwat Road in Nabilatuk district, which was carved out of Nakapiripirit district recently. The chief guest is expected to be President Yoweri Museveni.

Having Karamoja host the event is significant for various reasons. According to hunger and food security reports, Karamoja has always lagged behind in food security. However, in the last few years, there has been remarkable improvements in food production. “There are now visible crop farms in many parts of Karamoja. Many years ago, all you saw were livestock,” Joseph Sonic Lomonyang, Moroto district chairperson says. But still, he points out that the region still needs food assistance. Certainly, hosting the World Food Day in Karamoja can help advance both the crop growing and direct food assistance.

Although, according to the State of Food Security and Nutrition report 2018, there have been some gains in enhancing food security over the years, global challenges, such as conflict, extreme weather due to climate change, under-nutrition, increasing cases of obesity and under-nutrition are reversing progress made in the fight against

IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE A WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER BY 2030, WE HAVE TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS IN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE VARIABILITY

hunger and malnutrition.

“Areas such as Karamoja experience low rainfall (only one rainy season in a year) and long dry spells, which contribute to crop failure and exacerbate hunger and malnutrition,” a statement from FAO says.

The 2016 Report of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Analysis for Uganda classified Karamoja among the majorly stressed, with food security prospects expected to worsen. As such, households have to

cope by, among others, increasing exploitation of natural resources such as forests for firewood and charcoal.

“This increases their vulnerability to unfavourable weather and can cause livestock disease outbreaks,” the FAO report says.

World Food Day is celebrated world over to promote awareness about the plight of those who suffer from hunger and malnutrition, and to foster actions by various stakeholders to promote food security and more nutritious diets.

The theme for World Food Day 2018 is, *Our Actions are Our Future. A Zero-hunger World by 2030 is possible*. This theme, drawn from the Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending hunger, aims at focusing efforts on igniting commitments to end hunger in a world where over 820 million people suffer chronic undernourishment, according to the FAO’s State of Food Security and Nutrition, 2018 report.

To achieve the 2030 agenda, therefore, various actions have to be made by all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, farmers, the private sector and academia. During the World Food Day celebrations in Karamoja, FAO will exhibit technologies and knowledge materials that support resilience and enhancement of food and livestock production in the semi-arid Karamoja. FAO will also demonstrate benefits of tree planting in the area and suitable tree species for the area.

Farmers should adapt to weather

Continued from page 41

According to the 2018 report, cases of undernourishment in Uganda have increased drastically, compared to 2004 incidents. For example, while there were about 24.1% of cases of undernourishment in Uganda in 2006, this has risen to 41.4% in 2017. Undernourishment occurs when the body does not receive enough nourishment to thrive. Compared to regional countries, Kenya stands at 24.2%, Ethiopia at 21%, Zambia at 44.5% and Zimbabwe at 46.6%.

However, Uganda has recorded significant strides in fighting stunting among children below the age of five. According to the 2017 report, stunting occurred in about 28.9% of the children. This was an improvement from 34.2 in 2012. Under this, Uganda features much better than her regional peers. Kenya stands at 35.2%, Tanzania at 34.8%, while Rwanda stands at 36.7%.

Improvements

The report also shows that there has been a drop in cases of women suffering from anaemia in Uganda. For example, while 38.2% of women suffered from the disease in 2012, the number has since dropped to 32.2%. The trend is partly attributed to increased consumption of foods fortified with iron.

"Beans are the main source of protein to the Ugandan population, especially those in schools, hospitals and prisons. Having them bio-fortified provides an opportunity to add iron, an important micronutrient to these diets," says Dr Stanley Nkalubo, the head of bean research at the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI), Namulonge.

The population that is deemed as being food insecure stands at about 19% in Uganda, compared to 29.8% in Africa and 32.4% in East Africa. This shows a drop from 22.3% in 2014. The report attributes this performance to climatic changes, which among others led to flooding in many parts of Africa.

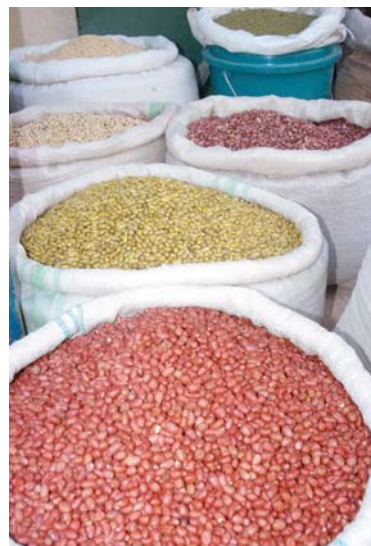
The annual United Nations (UN) report found that climate variability affecting rainfall patterns and agricultural seasons and climate extremes such as droughts and floods, are among key drivers of the rise in hunger, together with conflict and economic slowdowns.

"The alarming signs of increasing food insecurity and high levels of different forms of malnutrition are a warning that there is considerable work to be done to ensure that we 'leave no one behind' on the road towards achieving the SDGs on food security and improved nutrition," the heads of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organisation warned in their joint foreword to the report.

"If we are to achieve a world without hunger and malnutrition by 2050, it is imperative that we scale-up actions to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of food systems and people's livelihoods in response to climate variability," the report concludes.



Beans are the main source of protein to the Ugandan population, especially those in schools



Uganda should adopt drought-resistant varieties if it is to find hunger in the country



A home that was damaged by mudslides in Bududa, recently. Such weather shocks and extremes are cause far-reaching consequences that result in food insecurity as it causes destruction of crops

What is causing hunger?

According to a report last year, conflict and violence in parts of the world was one of the main drivers of hunger and food insecurity.

Evidence in this year's report highlights that besides conflicts, climate variability and extremes are also a key force behind the recent rise in global hunger. They are also one of the leading causes of food crises. The report indicates the number of extreme climate-related disasters, including extreme heat, droughts, floods and storms, has doubled since the early 1990s.

It says an average of 213 of these events have occurred every year during the period of 1990–2016.

This has harmed agricultural productivity contributing to shortfalls in food availability, with knock-on effects, causing food price hikes and income losses.

Also in many areas, climate extremes have increased in number and intensity, particularly where average temperatures are shifting upwards.

"Very hot days are becoming more frequent and the hottest days are becoming hotter. Extreme heat is

HUNGER IS WORSE IN COUNTRIES WITH HIGH DEPENDENCE ON RAINFALL VARIABILITY

associated with increased mortality, lower labour capacity and lower crop yields," the report says.

In addition to increasing temperatures and changes in rainfall, the nature of rainy seasons is also changing, specifically the timing of seasonal climate events.

It says several countries — in Africa, Central America and Southeast Asia — experienced drought, not only through abnormally low accumulated rainfall, but also through lower rainfall intensities and fewer days

of rainfall. Hunger is worse in countries with agricultural systems that are highly sensitive to rainfall and temperature variability.

It is also worse where the livelihood of a high proportion of the population depends on agriculture and where the country does not have in place sufficient support measures to counter the fallout.

The report says out of 27 countries with increasing change points in the prevalence of undernourishment occurring under severe drought stress conditions, most (19 countries) are in Africa.

The remaining four are in Asia, three in Latin America and the Caribbean and one in eastern Europe.

A high dependence on agriculture, as measured by the number of people employed in the sector, leaves the prevalence of undernourishment percentage points higher at 25%. For low-income countries, the increase is equal to 29%.

Additional reporting by Jackie Achan

Food insecurity increasing

According to a *Sauti za Wananchi* survey by Uwezo, a non-governmental organisation, released in March, the majority of Ugandans had faced food insecurity in the previous three months from the release of survey.

In the findings, seven people out of 10 said they had to skip a meal for lack of food, 69% said their households ran out of food, 67% said they were hungry, but had nothing to eat, while 85% were worried about running out of food.

Lead investigator Marie Nanyanzi said the findings revealed a challenging picture as citizens are hungry and struggling financially.

According to the FAO report, while hunger is on the rise, it is alarming that the people facing crisis-level food insecurity continue to increase.

In 2017, almost 124 million people across 51 countries in the world faced "crisis" levels of acute food insecurity, requiring emergency action to safeguard their lives and preserve their livelihoods.

This represents an increase compared to 2015 and 2016, when 80 and 108 million people, respectively, faced crisis levels.

In 34 of the 51 countries, over 76% of the populations face crisis levels of acute food insecurity and about 95 million people were affected by climate extremes.

The report says where conflict and climate shocks occur together, the impact on acute food insecurity is severe. In 2017, 14 out of the 34 food-crisis countries experienced a double impact of both conflict and climate shocks, which led to acute food insecurity.